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NEWS RELEASE

Oregon House Speaker and Senate President Announce Special Subcommittee on Transportation Planning as Part of Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight of the Modernization of Oregon's Transportation Infrastructure

SALEM, Ore. – Today, Oregon House Speaker Dan Rayfield and Senate President Rob Wagner announced the establishment of a Special Subcommittee on Transportation Planning, which will serve as a subcommittee to the Joint Committee on Transportation. The subcommittee will be tasked with reviewing the planning and implementation of major transportation projects, including those under the purview of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Urban Mobility Strategy.

Co-chairing the subcommittee will be State Senator Lew Frederick (D-N/NE Portland), Co-Chair of the Joint Transportation Committee, and State Representative Nancy Nathanson (D-Eugene), Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Audits Committee, longtime member of the Joint Transportation Committee, and prior Co-Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee.

The purpose and mission of the subcommittee as part of the Joint Transportation Committee's ongoing work was outlined in a letter to Governor Tina Kotek signed by House Speaker Dan Rayfield, Senate President Rob Wagner, and Joint Transportation Committee Co-Chairs Representative Susan McLain and Senator Fredrick: "A stable, reliable transportation system that aligns with Oregon's economic and climate goals is vital to the well-being of Oregon families. The time to repair and modernize our infrastructure is now. As ODOT takes on this important work, the public's confidence in the state's ability to provide clear, consistent, and accurate information about the impacts this work will have on our communities is critical."

The letter continued: "It is important to clearly understand whether and how ODOT will meet these critical goals of ensuring safety, mitigating congestion, supporting our economy, and

reducing pollution. While responsibility for developing and implementing plans to do so reside in the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch has an appropriate and important oversight role to ensure that legitimate questions and concerns of legislators, impacted communities, stakeholders and Oregonians are understood, consistently communicated, and addressed.”

The legislative leaders also noted that they support Governor Kotek’s decision to delay I-205 toll collection, and trust her ability to balance this pause with the completion of the projects outlined in [House Bill 2017](#).

Oregon relies on its transportation system for a number of critical needs:

- **Moving people and vehicles safely, on roads and bridges that are in good repair and earthquake ready.** We need to act now to make sure vital bridges don’t crumble in the event of an Earthquake.
- **Mitigating congestion in a creative, sustainable, and equitable way.** Congestion not only slows the movement of people and goods but **currently costs our economy an estimated \$1.2 million a day**. Without improvement to the system, congestion is projected to double by 2045.
- **Meeting our climate goals.** By reducing congestion and increasing Oregon’s multimodal transportation options, these projects can help us reduce carbon emissions and make sure our transportation system better aligns with Oregon values to address climate change.

It is important to thoroughly consider whether projects, like planned tolling and the Regional Mobility Pricing Project, are disproportionately impacting certain communities and that any impacts are equitable and mitigated to the fullest extent possible.

Being able to pay for these needs will require a range of financial strategies, one of which is tolling. Tolling is used as an essential finance mechanism throughout the country and is already used to finance transportation and infrastructure within Oregon.

The expansion of tolling in Oregon, however, will come with a variety of impacts on different communities. Tolling will create shifts in traffic patterns which will increase pressure on local roadways. It’s likely that the cost of tolling could fall more heavily on lower income drivers. And while the technology of tolling is more sophisticated and lower friction than the toll booths of the past, implementation details matter.

Under the guidance of the Joint Transportation Committee, the subcommittee will meet publicly during the 2023-2024 interim to ask questions and receive testimony from ODOT, appropriate members of the Executive Branch, stakeholders in the transportation system, representatives of the affected communities, and the public. The subcommittee will inform the Joint Committee on Transportation’s recommendations as needed to the Governor, ODOT, and the Legislature for consideration during the 2024 legislative session.

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